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# Statements and Speeches (1975-1979): Speech 03

Amyas Ames

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November 14, 1975

Presentation of the Report of the  
National Committee for Cultural Resources  
to the Joint Committee of Congress by  
Amyas Ames - Chairman

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May I present the "National Report on the Arts" and ask that it be a part of the record.

I represent a nationwide committee whose members include leaders of arts organisations, business, labor, state arts agencies, city governments, community arts and education. The committee's advisers, who helped in preparing the report, have been drawn from national foundations and national associations of arts agencies, and the committee's support has come from a nationally diversified group of foundations and individuals.

The report draws nine conclusions and they are briefly summarized at its beginning. To be brief, let me call your particular attention to conclusions #5 and #6:

- #5 "Despite the heightened role of the arts in American life, there is cause for deep concern about the future of the organizations that bring the arts to the public."
- #6 "Many arts organizations are being forced to drop ongoing or planned programs, thus depriving the public and weakening the fabric of our cultural life."

The report points to a paradox: the more technologically advanced we become as a nation, the greater the economic burden on arts organizations, because they are unable to keep pace with the rising costs of an economy based on mechanization and mass production.

A key conclusion of the report, based on a nationwide study, is that an increase in funding from all sources of 14 percent of total operating costs is needed to maintain the stability of the nation's art organizations and to enable them to provide full service to the public.

Such conclusions, in view of the findings of the report - that the interest of people in the arts has risen steadily over the past decade and continues to rise - that the arts are a growth industry, are a serious indictment of local, state and Federal support procedures.

The sources of support, in a test made by the Committee, are shown in the chart on Page 5 of the report, and I draw your particular attention to it. Local support - what the report calls a "mixed economy" of support unique to the United States - has grown strongly in each of the last troubled years, testimonial to the love Americans have for the arts.

And the report -(Conclusion #8) - strongly affirms that the preponderant source of support for the arts (now over 80%) must continue to be local and that this support must increase as public subsidy grows.

Federal aid, as shown in the charts, has met only 3.6% of costs, an amount not sufficient to aid arts organizations materially.

The National Committee for Cultural Resources in its ninth and final conclusion, recommends that each state should provide an average of no less than 10 percent of the operating costs of its arts organizations, and that Federal aid should provide an average of no less than 10 percent of the total costs of arts organizations throughout the country. In making this recommendation, the committee recognizes that many organizations properly may receive substantially more than 10 percent, and others less, according to their separate circumstances.

For the National Endowment for the Arts, this would translate into an appropriation of no less than \$225-million in 1976-77. That is the considered judgment of this committee, and I recommend it to you as a course of action.

The Committee's report presents fresh evidence, a June 1975 report of Louis Harris Associates Inc., that 93% Americans believe that museums, theaters, concert halls and like facilities are important to the quality of life in a community.

The Committee's work affirms that arts organizations play an important role in the nation's economy. They are substantial purchasers of goods. Their existence

enhances real estate values. They nurture the economic health of other's industries. They help communities attract business and industry and, in turn, help them to attract competent people. They employ hundreds of thousands of men and women. They stimulate tourism and the many businesses which benefit from it.

The Committee recommends Federal aid and at no less than an average of 10% of operating costs. Where else, in its appropriation of funds in support of the activities of American people, can the Federal government get \$9 of activity for each \$1 of support?

In conclusion, I would deal directly with a question that I know is in your minds. Why, in a period of crises, with so many troubled areas in your economy, why this intense importance placed on the arts? Abraham Lincoln had something to say about it in 1858, and he said it better than any of us:

"What constitutes the bulwark of our own liberty and independence?

It is not our frowning battlements, ---

These are not our reliance against tyranny ---.

Our defense is in the spirit ---.

Destroy this spirit and you have planted the seeds of despotism at your own doors."

About a hundred years later, George Kennan, in a series of lectures on our foreign policy, addressed himself to the same truths. He had thought carefully about the problem of inward and outward strength, and one theme of his was the danger that in our obsession with strength in the world, we would undermine the foundation of our strength at home. He told Americans in 1954 that although adequate military forces were one necessary expression of our strength, what we made of ourselves at home was the very source of our strength.

A very large component - perhaps the largest - of a nation's strength is the degree of its citizens' personal, human satisfaction. Every other strength flows from this. I am sure that if you will weigh this in the balance, you will conclude that it is wiser to delay some small part of our great, technological, but costly and non-human projects, so that increased human satisfaction may be realized in all our states and in all our communities.